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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the research on the factors influencing marital satisfaction, selected research on locus of control, research on the measurement of locus of control, and the recent research on locus of control and marital satisfaction. It analyzes this research from the standpoint of criticisms of the research on locus of control and makes recommendations about its utility in the therapeutic setting. Included are chapters on marital satisfaction, locus of control, the research correlating marital satisfaction and locus of control, the use and misuse of Rotter's measurement of locus of control, and theories related to locus of control. The review concludes that it is difficult to draw straight-forward conclusions about the research on locus of control and marital satisfaction since much of the existing research is complicated by methodological problems, assessment difficulties, and interpretation biases. It is further concluded that these research problems are complicated by a lack of understanding or by a misunderstanding of the locus of control construct and its theoretical base. Practitioners who might consider locus of control when counseling married couples are encouraged to fully understand and appreciate the implications of the literature that draws the conclusion that internality is the preferred orientation with respect to marital satisfaction. It is suggested that the research on locus of control and marital satisfaction is valuable if viewed in the context of social learning theory. (NB)

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Analysis of the Locus of Control Construct and its Relationship to Marital Satisfaction

by

Patricia Ann Thobro

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The loss of productivity for marital discord is about one and half billion dollars a year (Lederer & Jackson, 1968). For the therapist, an understanding of the factors that promote or inhibit marital satisfaction is a goal worthy of the attempts made to investigate these factors by the researchers in the field. Because the construct of locus of control has been found by researchers to be related to adjustment, autonomy, self-confidence, and other factors (Rotter, 1966), its influence in the marital relationship is being researched (Doherty, 1983). The predominance of the research done has shown, fairly consistently, that internality is positively related to marital satisfaction. Internal couples display more problem solving efficacy, better communication patterns and are less blame oriented (Doherty, 1983). A reasonable conclusion, then, would be that, as a goal of therapy, an increase in the couple's internal locus of control would accompany an increase in overall marital satisfaction.

Definition of Terms

Internal and external locus of control was defined by Rotter (1966) in a monograph outlining the research which underlies his conceptualization of the construct. Since his research, other investigators have adopted the terminology that Rotter used to describe individuals who demonstrate either an internal or external locus of control. These individuals have historically been described in the literature as "internals" or "externals," or as exhibiting "internality" or "externality."

It is acknowledged by this author that these terms constitute psychological jargon, are grammatically incorrect, and do not accurately reflect the true meaning of the words internal and external. Because of the copious usage of this terminology in the context of this paper, and for clarity and readability, the words "internal" and "external" will hereafter not be enclosed

in quotation marks. For purposes of this paper, the aforementioned terms are defined as follows:

The "internal" individual; "internals" - individuals demonstrating a more internal locus of control.

"Internality" - the quality of being "internal."

The "external" individual; "externals" - individuals demonstrating a more external locus of control.

"Externality" - the quality of being "external."

Purpose of the Paper

On the surface, the assumption that an increase in the couple's internal locus of control would accompany an increase in overall marital satisfaction makes good intuitive sense, and the consistency in the results of the studies provides further evidence of the relationship between internal control and marital satisfaction. However, if one looks closely at the construct of locus of control, it is discovered that, as conceptualized by

Rotter (1966), this is a concept that is founded in social learning theory and that locus of control in an individual is largely the result of prior learning in the environmental context in which he/she was raised. It would seem that, as a variable, it would be relatively unchangeable.

In the literature on marital satisfaction reviewed for this paper, the assessment of locus of control is done primarily with the use of Rotter's I-E scale. His conceptualization of the construct is therefore critical to the conclusions drawn by this research.

This paper will attempt to summarize the research on the factors influencing marital satisfaction, selected research on locus of control, research on the measurement of locus of control, and the recent research on locus of control and marital satisfaction. In light of the apparent inconsistencies and criticisms of the research on locus of control, this paper will also attempt to analyze this research from the standpoint of these criticisms and attempt to make recommendations about its utility in the therapeutic setting.

CHAPTER II

MARITAL SATISFACTION

Definition of Marital Satisfaction

What distinguishes a satisfying marriage from one that is unsatisfying? Is satisfaction related to, or the equivalent of happiness? Is satisfaction in marriage the same thing as marital happiness or is satisfaction the result of happiness? Is happiness perhaps the standard by which marital satisfaction is evaluated? What characterizes marital satisfaction? How is it measured? Are the measurements currently being used adequate? Reliable? Meaningful? Is there an adequate model for the prediction of marital satisfaction? Based on what? How does (or can) one distinguish a marriage that will become more satisfying over time from one that becomes less satisfying? What are the factors that relate to marital satisfaction? These are some of the questions that researchers attempt to answer with their investigations on marital satisfaction.

Marital happiness, according to Terman, (1938) is largely a subjective feeling, the meaning of which can be applied "in a sense familiar to everyone" (Terman, 1938,

p. 3). The criterion for rating happiness is usually a composite of two kinds of data: 1) subjective ratings of happiness levels; and 2) factual information about such things as agreement/disagreement, conflict resolution, specific areas of dissatisfaction, or regret of choice of mate. Gray-Little and Burks (1983) view happiness and satisfaction as a similar construct that "refers to the spouses' subjective satisfaction with the marriage as a whole, as well as to their satisfaction with specific aspects of the marital relationship" (p. 516). Even though these researchers feel that the instruments used to measure this construct vary in psychometric adequacy, there is "at least tacit agreement about the concept being measured" (p. 516).

Research on Factors Affecting Marital Satisfaction

What factors effect, or influence, marital satisfaction? In his book Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness, Terman (1938) attempted to ascertain the degree of association between marital happiness and 380 separate variables! These variables included, among others, age, income, presence or absence of children,

attitudes about sex, religious affiliation, mental ability, family of origin relationships, and numerous personality factors, including neurotic tendency, self-sufficiency, introversion, dominance, and sex-role orientation. The results of this complicated and formidable study are beyond the scope of this paper; its inclusion is to indicate the great number of variables that can interact with the construct of marital satisfaction.

Some of the more recent studies have attempted to look at the relationship between some of Terman's variables and marital satisfaction, using more sophisticated or refined measures. Zammichieli et al. (1988) investigated the relationship between marital satisfaction and sex-role orientation. She found that androgynous partners report higher satisfaction than sex-typed (traditional role) couples or incongruent (sex-typed spouse with non-sex-typed spouse). Although it was hypothesized that sex-type couples would exhibit high marital satisfaction because of the complementarity of demonstrating and valuing traditional sex roles, this idea was not upheld by the study. Instead her results

seem to indicate that sex-role orientation alone may not be the factor in marital satisfaction as much as the role flexibility of the androgynous partners. Whisman and Jacobsen (1989) also found that feminine sex-typed women have a tendency to develop symptoms and characteristics of learned helplessness, loss-of-control, and depression. They posit that more masculine sex-typed personality characteristics provide a buffer against the development of depression because of the tendency to believe in one's ability to deal with and control the environment.

There is a large body of literature on the relationship between power and marital satisfaction, as evidenced by a review of these types of studies, done by Gray-Little and Burks (1983). Most of these studies, the authors contend, conceive of marital power as a "function of which partner makes most of the decisions in various distinct areas." They further contend that although other researchers have attempted to make distinctions between different types of power, that the construct of power is more complicated than it is typically conceived of when attempts are made to measure it. In spite of the definitional difficulties, their review of the literature

bears out a rather consistent findings in this regard. A great majority of the studies on power (using decision making as an index of marital power) indicate that the highest levels of marital satisfaction occur in either egalitarian marriages or husband-dominant marriages, and that the lowest satisfaction occurred in wife-dominant marriages. They offer three explanations for the apparent low level of satisfaction in wife dominant marriages. First is the response set that leads most subjects to report traditional roles and high levels of satisfaction, a situation which makes the observed relationship possibly artifactitious· (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). The authors feel that under-reporting of dissatisfaction is a likely result of the self-report nature of most marital satisfaction scales. The role-congruency model suggests that departure from cultural norms may lead to dissatisfaction among couples who feel social pressure to conform to traditional sex-role stereotypes. A third possibility is that the wife plays a dominant role by default; when the husband cannot or will not take on the husband's more typical responsibilities. The authors' conclusion is that the element that

appears to be crucial to marital satisfaction is not equality of power per se, but rather it is the perception of equity.

In a correlational study between marital satisfaction and neuroticism and extraversion, Lester, Haig, & Monello (1989), found that marital dissatisfaction was associated with one's own neuroticism score and one's spouses extraversion score. The author speculates that high extraversion in one partner may result in a less attentive stance toward their spouses needs.

Exchange orientation, the attitude that interpersonal relationships are valued on the basis of the equity of exchange, was found to be negatively associated with marital satisfaction (Broderick & O'Leary, 1986). If one partner has a high exchange orientation, they tend to keep score on what is done for the spouse, becoming highly distressed if reciprocity is not received.

Inasmuch as marital satisfaction can be related to marital adjustment, it has been demonstrated that high-sensation seeking (experience-seeking) wives, regardless of the husband's sensation seeking level, have a lower level of marital adjustment than low sensation-seeking

women (Gibson, Franken, & Rowland (1989). It is hypothesized that this "non-traditional" personality places her outside of an expected role pattern, a finding that parallels the study by Zammichieli et al. (1988) on sex-role orientation and marital satisfaction.

A study by Smith, Snyder, Trull, & Monsma (1988) examined the relationship between marital satisfaction and leisure time and found that satisfaction, particularly for the wife, was enhanced by having leisure interaction with the spouse alone, or increased time in individual activities. The authors feel as if the directions of influence are reciprocal, in the sense that time together increases satisfaction, and satisfaction increases the likelihood of time spent together.

A study by Madden (1987) found a relationship between marital satisfaction and perceptions of control, and the correlation was highest for women. Also, for women, control of activities (spending money, division of housework and child care, choice of recreation or vacation, socializing, family decisions, etc.) is more important to marital satisfaction than it is for men.

An earlier study by Madden and Janoff-Bulman (1981), indicates that greater levels of satisfaction were achieved for women who believed they could affect marital outcomes (perceived control). Additionally, satisfaction was negatively associated with husband blame. The most satisfied wives are those who do not blame their husbands for marital conflicts and who feel they have shared control over the resolution of conflicts which arise. Greater perceived control was also associated with increased belief in resolvability for women regardless of perceived fault or blame.

Assessment of Marital Satisfaction

In order for marital satisfaction to be investigated, it must be measurable and quantifiable. Although happiness or satisfaction cannot be measured in terms of equal units, the relative measures of degrees of happiness can be inferred from self-report on these variables.

The growing interest in the assessment of marriage is coupled with a growing concern of researchers and therapists to find more reliable data on which to base theory and practice (Filsinger & Lewis, 1981). Research-

ers have historically relied on different self-report scales to measure marital satisfaction. The measurement of marital satisfaction is accomplished with the use of one (or more) of a variety of different scales that measure different aspects of the marital relationship. Some of the more widely used scales are the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), the Marital Adjustment Scale (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Snyder, Wills, & Keiser, 1979), the Locke Marital Relationship Inventory (Locke, 1968), and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (Locke, 1968). Despite this, Filsinger & Lewis (1981) cite several problems with these kinds of self-report measures.

(1) Self-reports force the subject to be a scientist, under the faulty assumption that each spouse can be objective enough to assess the quality of his or her own relationship.

(2) Few subjects are articulate enough to describe meaningfully something so complex as the qualitative dimensions of their relationships.

(3) Even though spouses' perceptions are important for understanding some aspects of their relationships (the value of subjective reality), responses are often

> distorted in order to conform with what the subject believes is socially desirable (p. 264).

The research on marital satisfaction relies fairly heavily on these self-report instruments, as does the research on locus of control. From a phenomenological point of view, it could be said that, although desire for conformity and approval may be confounding factors, it is the partners' subjective reality of his/her perceptions that is at issue and to try to investigate beyond that dimension is meaningless for the purposed of this kind of research. It might also be said that self report tells what a person values, not what he does, or believes.

Although many of the measures are based on self-report, some new research on marital interaction, utilizing observational coding systems, has contributed to the development of models of marital distress (Filsinger & Lewis, 1981). Snyder, et al. (1981) conducted a study to determine the validity of a commonly used self-report measure of marital satisfaction, the Marriage Satisfaction Inventory, and found that the overall

results lend strong support to the usefulness of this inventory to determine the extent and sources of marital distress.

Gottman (1979), citing Terman's (1938) findings, points to the importance of studying the interaction of married couples by observational methods. He advocates the use of newly refined conceptual tools that would enhance the empirical nature of studies of marital interaction. Gottman (1979) and Filsinger & Lewis (1981) review and illustrate a number of techniques and models, utilizing direct observation techniques, that are being used for this purpose. Since the literature on locus of control and marital satisfaction reports primarily the use of self-report measures of marital satisfaction, the discussion will focus on these assessment tools, and their shortcomings, exclusively.

CHAPTER III

LOCUS OF CONTROL

Rotter's Theory

Rotter (1966) defines locus of control as "the degree to which the individual perceives that the reward follows from or is contingent upon, his (her) own behavior or attributes versus the degree to which he (she) feels the reward is controlled by forces outside of himself (herself) and may occur independently of his (her) own actions" (p. 1). These forces are perceived as the "result of luck, chance, fate, as under the control of powerful others, or as unpredictable because of the great complexity of the forces surrounding him (her)" (p. 1). Thus, a person believing in these external forces is said to have an external locus of control. A person who perceives that outcome or reward is contingent upon his/her own action or behavior is said to have an internal locus of control.

Rotter's theory is an extension of social learning theory, which is based on the nature and effects of reinforcement. Reinforcement strengthens the "expectancy" that similar behavior will result in similar rein-

forcement. Rotter outlines a number of other psychological variables that bear some relationship to this construct. He cites previous studies that have shown parallels between externality and passivity, and internality and competence, autonomy and need for achievement. The latter correlates are based on the subjects' need for mastery of the environment coupled with a belief in their own ability and skill as determinants of the outcome. Rotter conducted a series of experiments that provide strong support for the hypothesis that individuals with an internal locus of control are more likely to: (a) be alert to the aspects of the environment that provide useful information for determining future behavior; (b) actively attempt to improve his/her environmental condition; (c) place greater value on skill and achievement; (d) be generally more concerned with his/her ability; and (e) be resistive to subtle attempts to influence him/her.

Research on Locus of Control

Since Rotter's work in 1966, numerous research studies have attempted to correlate the concept of locus of control to other personality variables (Joe, 1971; Cellini & Kantorowski, 1982). There have also been some criticisms of the construct itself and the instrument used to measure the construct.

A study by Mirels (1970), cited in Joe (1971), involved a factor analysis of the items comprising the I-E scale. His study yielded two factors. Factor I concerns the respondent's inclination to assign hard work or luck as influencing personally relevant outcomes. Factor II focuses on the respondent's acceptance or rejection of the idea that a person has control over political and world affairs. His conclusion is that predictions involving Rotter's scale might be refined by separate consideration of these factors.

In a selected review of the literature generated by Rotter's studies, Joe (1971) reports some of the results of correlational studies that have been done. The findings of these studies depict externals as lacking in self-confidence and insight, as relatively anxious,

aggressive, dogmatic, less trustful, more suspicious, less well adjusted and as having a lower need for social approval, while internals show more initiative, can better control impulsive behavior and manifest greater interest and effort in achievement-related activities. His conclusion, however is that further improvements are needed on the I-E scale to provide finer discrimination within the construct.

In 1974, a study by Reid & Ware demonstrated that self-control was a third, and as yet, unacknowledged dimension of locus of control. The authors indicate that the studies done previously on this construct have applied it unidimensionally. They argue that Rotter's scale measures fatalism and social system control and that use of his instrument might not be profitable in research on locus of control. The results of Reid & Ware's study were only partially replicated by Schlegel and Crawford (1976), leaving some doubt as to the validity of self-control as a third dimension of I-E control. Using Australian subjects, Dragutinovich, White & Austin (1983) confirmed Schlegel and Crawford's results, and compared the Reid-Ware scale with a shorter

version and found general invariance between the two measures.

Another study around the same time was done in an attempt to construct an entirely new scale to use in locus of control research (Levenson, 1974). Levenson constructed three new scales (internal, chance, and powerful others) in order to differentiate aspects of the construct, to more fully understand the relationship between involvement and expectation for control. A study done by Walkey (1979) confirmed the three-factor structure underlying Levenson's questionnaire, stating that her evidence for the need to refine internal-external control into three separate orientations is clearly supported.

Measuring Locus of Control

Since Rotter's original research, over 30 scales have been devised to measure the concept of locus of control (Lefcourt, 1983), some of which are used with specific populations and/or have minimal construct validity. Some of the more widely used scales in

addition to Rotter's I-E scale, are Levenson's Internal, Chance, & Powerful Others Scale, and Reid & Ware's three-factor scale (Lefcourt, 1981).

In 1984, Duttweiler (1984), constructed an entirely new measure of locus of control, based on the idea that a more sensitive instrument was needed to measure this construct, primarily because of the criticisms of earlier instruments of their format, response set, dimensionality and low reliability. This instrument, called the Internal Control Index (ICI), purports to measure aspects of personal choice, belief in one's self, and independent action, rather than belief in fate, chance, or luck (external factors). It is interesting to note that Duttweiler refers to locus of control as a "personality trait," a conceptualization that Rotter specifically advised against (Rotter, 1975).

In a correlational study of five locus of control scales, Goodman and Waters (1987) found low to moderate interscale correlations. The scales (and sub-scales) used in this study were:

1. Rotter's I-E scale
2. Reid & Ware (Fatalism, SSC, SC)

3. ICI (Duttweiler)

4. ANS-IE (Adult Nowicki Strickland)

5. Levenson (Internal, Powerful others, Chance)

In summary, it seems the construct of locus of control may be misunderstood, and that measurement devices may be as diverse and varied as the conceptualizations of the construct. However, in spite of the criticisms of Rotter's I-E scale, it has proven to be a popular instrument, a fact reflected in the large number of research investigations that have been conducted with it (Lefcourt, 1981).

Because of some of the potential problems, a more detailed analysis of the measurement of locus of control is undertaken before a discussion of its possible relationship to marital satisfaction.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESEARCH CORRELATING MARITAL SATISFACTION AND LOCUS OF CONTROL

Relatively little research has been done examining the relationship between locus of control and marital satisfaction (Lefcourt, 1983). Constantine and Bahr (1981) found only two studies in the literature which examined the relationship between locus of control and the marital relationship, both of which dealt directly with the levels of satisfaction in marriage. However, some researchers investigated the locus of control concept in the context of other variables in marriage and found a more or less consistent pattern of marital satisfaction related positively to internal locus of control. Thirteen studies were reviewed (see table 1 at the end of the chapter, for a chronologic listing, including assessment instruments used).

Mlott and Lira (1977) found that wives in unstable marriages demonstrated greater external control than their husbands. The authors imply that it is possible the external wife is less likely to invest in salvaging a marriage by dealing with difficulties she feels are beyond her control, and that the externally oriented wife

is more likely to blame her husband for the difficulties rather than assume some share of the responsibility for the problems in the marriage.

Chu and Bergsma (1978) found that similarity of locus of control was associated with marital satisfaction, regardless of an internal or external orientation, and that convergence to a similar orientation seemed to occur over the course of the marriage. This study does not support the conclusion of Mlott and Lira (1977), nor most of the subsequent studies that have attempted to correlate these two constructs.

Genshaft (1980), using ten couples solicited from a mental health center and identified as being in treatment for marital maladjustment, found that the wives in these marriages tended to perceive greater external controls than wives in a "satisfied" control group, recruited, and rated as happily married, by local clergymen. All couples were given a marital adjustment test and scores were correlated with I-E scores. The authors contend that the data support the need to

underscore the role of "internal reference systems" in marital relationships.

Doherty (1980) found that higher levels of marital satisfaction were found in subjects with a more internal orientation. This study also demonstrated higher internality in the divorced group, suggesting that either internals are more likely to get divorced or that an increase in internality is a by-product of the divorce experience. The author admits, however, that the causal direction can only be speculated upon.

A longitudinal study was undertaken to investigate the relationship of locus of control to marital stability (Constantine and Bahr, 1981). The results provide little support for any of the previous studies (Mlott and Lira, 1977; Chu and Bergsma, 1978, Genshaft, 1980, Doherty, 1980). They found no significant relationship between marital stability and locus of control. This study, however, used marital status alone as the measure of stability; satisfaction can only be assumed in the still-married subjects.

Doherty (1981) found no evidence of homogamy or complementarity on spouses' locus of control scores, and

found no correlation between dissimilarity of locus of control and marital satisfaction alone. The study showed evidence of only one pattern that may be associated with marital dissatisfaction in wives - that of a more external wife and a more internal husband. These conclusions support the study done by Mlott and Lira (1977), although Doherty has a somewhat different hypothesis about the source of dissatisfaction. Using the Spouse Adjective test (SPAT), Doherty found that internal husbands describe their external wives as "aggressive and trying." He postulates that the internal husband may be, not only unsympathetic to, but annoyed by, his external wife's need for emotional support.

Using their newly developed Marital Locus of Control Scale (MMLOC), Miller, Lefcourt, & Ware (1983) found similar results. Internality, as measured by this new scale, was positively correlated with marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Externality was also associated with lower levels of self-reported intimacy. The authors propose that this may be reflective of a lack of sensitivity to the spouse's mood or feelings.

A study by Bugaighis, Schumm, Billman, & Jurich (1983) partly replicated Mlott and Lira, (1977) and Doherty (1980), whose results indicated that a more externally oriented wife and more internally oriented husband exhibited higher levels of marital dissatisfaction. The Bugaighis study indicated that the greater the internal locus of control, the higher the level of marital satisfaction.

Clayson and Frost (1984) found a positive relationship between internality and marital satisfaction. They also found that internal subjects perceived their spouse more favorably than externally controlled subjects.

Another study done by Miller, Lefcourt, Holmes, Ware, & Saleh (1986), using the MMLOC scale and Rotter's I-E scale (Rotter, 1966), found internal partners are more satisfied with their marriage. The study also found that internals were more effective in communicating and achieving goals, and were more effective problem solvers within the marriage.

Contrary to Doherty's (1980) study, Sabatelli (1986) found that wives that are relatively more external than their husband found marital interaction more rewarding.

Sabatelli also found that regardless of the wife's orientation, she was relatively more satisfied with an internal husband and more dissatisfied with an external husband. Husbands also reported being more satisfied with internally oriented wives.

Smolen and Spiegel (1987) found that for husbands, internal locus of control serves to buffer the negative effects on marital conflict on their level of marital satisfaction. This relationship was not found for wives. The authors speculate that marital satisfaction may be more situationally determined for wives than for husbands.

Scanzoni and Arnett (1987), using Levenson's locus of control scale, found a consistent relationship between internal locus of control and commitment to marriage. For both husband and wife, the belief that fate controlled the outcome of the marriage lessened the commitment to the marriage. For wives, a belief that they had personal control over the events and outcomes in the marriage was associated with higher levels of commitment. This relationship was not seen for husbands.

In conclusion, the predominate finding in most of the research relating locus of control to marital satisfaction, is that marital satisfaction is positively related to internal locus of control. Because of its relevance to the discussion of the research, table 1 is included to demonstrate that Rotter's I-E locus of control scale was used in nine out of thirteen of the research studies reviewed. The significance of it's use in the studies will be elucidated further in the discussion.

Table 1

INSTRUMENTS USED IN RESEARCH ON LOCUS OF CONTROL AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

AUTHOR	MARITAL SATISFACTION	LOCUS OF CONTROL
Mlott & Lira (1977)	Identified clients/marital therapy	Rotter I-E
Chu & Bergsma (1978)	Marital Relationship Survey (researcher constructed)	Rotter I-E
Genshaft (1980)	Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) Repression-Sensitization (RS)	Rotter I-E
Doherty (1980)	(marital status)	Rotter I-E (21-item)
Constantine & Bahr (1981)	(marital status - longitudinal)	Rotter I-E (short)
Doherty (1981)	Marital Adjustment Test Ryder's Lovesickness Scale Spouse Adjective Test (SPAT)	Rotter I-E
Miller, et al. (1983)	Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS)	MMLOC*
Bugaighis, et al. (1983)	(3 questions - author constructed)	(1 question - author constructed)
Clayson & Frost (1984)	(1 question - better or worse? author constructed)	Rotter I-E (short)
Miller, et al. (1986)	Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) Couple Interaction Scoring System (CISS) Coding Scheme for Interpersonal Conflict	MMLOC* Rotter I-E
Sabatelli (1986)	Marital Adjustment Test Ryder Lovesickness Scale	Rotter I-E
Smolen & Spiegel (1987)	Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) Marital Transgression Scale (MTS)	MMLOC*
Scanzoni & Arnett (1987)	(conflict resolution - author constructed)	(3 measures adapted from Levenson, 1974 and Walkey,1979)

*Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale

CHAPTER V
USE AND MIS-USE OF ROTTER'S MEASUREMENT OF LOCUS OF CONTROL

Rotter's Concerns

Central to the discussion of the research on locus of control and marital satisfaction is a consideration of the concept of locus of control, and its measurement. Before conclusions can be drawn on its relationship (or non-relationship) to marital satisfaction, or to any other research question, one must look carefully at its conception, its theoretical base, its relation to the instruments used to measure it, and the level of agreement between researchers as to its meaning and application to human behavior.

Rotter's (1966) conceptualization of locus of control draws on social learning theory, a theory of personality that integrates stimulus-response theories and cognitive (field) theories. According to Rotter (1975), this theory attempts to deal with the complexities of human behavior by integrating four classes of variables: behaviors, expectancies, reinforcements, and psychological situations.

> In its most basic form, the general formula for behavior is that the potential for a behavior to occur in any specific psychological situation is a function of the expectancy that the behavior will lead to a particular reinforcement in that situation and the value of that reinforcement. Expectancies in each situation are determined not only by specific experiences in that situation but also, to some varying extent, by experiences in other situations that the individual perceives as similar (p. 57).

There is considerable evidence to support the assumption that the more novel or ambiguous the situation is, the more important the generalized expectancy becomes (Rotter, 1975). A "generalized expectancy" is defined by Fleming and Courtney (1983) as "the relative pervasiveness of control orientation, implying a reasonably stable characteristic in people without denying that situation-specific perceptions may often occur which are uncharacteristic of such a general tendency" (p. 101).

Because the majority of the research on locus of control and marital satisfaction uses Rotter's I-E scale as the measure of locus of control, it seems relevant at this juncture to outline Rotter's own concerns about the direction taken and conclusions drawn from this research (Rotter, 1975). Rotter discusses three primary areas in

which misconceptions about his research occur. They are in (1) the conceptualization of the theory, (2) the measurement of the construct, and (3) in the meaning of "externality."

One of the primary conceptualization problems is the failure to consider reinforcement value as a separate variable. In order to make any predictions about behavior based on locus of control, the researcher must either control reinforcement value or measure it in some way and then systematically take it into account when drawing conclusions. A second conceptualization problem is the "good guy - bad guy" syndrome. Psychologists assume it is "good" to be internal and "bad" to be external. Because the research suggests that it is typical for internals to repress or forget failures, they may admit, or self-report, less anxiety, etc. Rotter suggests that this may create a false positive relationship between internality and adjustment.

The problems discussed by Rotter in the use of his instrument include: (1) a lack of understanding of the theory underlying the scale, (2) a mis-use of the instrument as a narrow-gauge predictor, and (3) an

unwarranted application of the scale in predicting individual behavior in a specific situation. Rotter expresses the concern that some investigators have referred to locus of control as the major or central concept in social learning theory, which he says "it is not." It was conceived to be a variable that might help refine predictions of how reinforcements change expectancies. His concern is that the scale was developed as a broad gauge instrument - not as an instrument to allow for very high prediction in some specific situation, but rather to allow for a low degree of prediction of behavior across a wide range of potential situations. He warns that the level of prediction in a specific situation is theoretically limited, and individual prediction for practical purposes is simply not warranted. Further, he says, there is nothing in the test to suggest typologies and that there is absolutely no justification for conceiving it as such. He concludes his discussion by cautioning psychological researchers against ignoring the value of the reinforcements of the behavior being studied, and conceiving the construct to be a behavioral trait. Some researchers refer to the construct as a

personality "trait" (Duttweiler, 1984), or as a "personality characteristic" (Doherty, 1981). It appears as if this construct is conceptualized as a trait or characteristic more consistently than as an attitude along a continuum of general expectancies about outcome.

Rotter's argument seems to imply that psychological researchers may be attaching a meaning to the construct that he did not intend. He warns researchers about the inadvisability of using the scale he devised in ways other than as defined by his experiments.

He answers the criticisms of his scale as unidimensional (Levenson, 1974; Mirels, 1970; Reid & Ware, 1974) by pointing out that this thinking is contrary to the social learning theory of behavior. He asserts that the broad concept of internal vs. external control is viable, as a better-than-chance relationship exists between attitudes demonstrated by both groups. He does not criticize the development of more narrowly defined subscales in which referents are more closely related to one another than to referents of other sub-scales.

Research studies involving factor analyses of the items in Rotter's scale have tended to show that the

scale is not measuring a single construct (Reid & Ware, 1974). Although Rotter (1975) does not discourage the use of factor analysis he cautions against "the notion that the factor analysis of any particular scale reveals the 'true structure' of the construct" (page 63).

As a social learning theorist, Rotter is particularly disturbed by some psychologists' definition of externality. His concern is that the meaning is interpreted as a person who is defensive, passive, rationalizing (things are a matter of luck) and blame projecting (controlled by powerful others).

Rotter's overall conclusion is that:

> One must guard against the assumption that expectancy regarding control of reinforcement is a behavior trait and that prediction of behavior can ignore the value of the reinforcement that is the expected outcome of the behavior being studied (p. 67).

Locus of Control and Social Desirability

Even though Rotter (1975) claims to have developed the scale in such a way as to reduce correlations with social desirability (specifically the Marlowe-Crowne

Social Desirability Scale), it appears that other researchers' results have been inconclusive.

Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan (1987) found a significant correlation between the internality dimension of Rotter's scale and social desirability as measured by the Edwards Social Desirability Scale. They attribute this to either the fact that Rotter's scale is confounded with a socially desirable response set, or that the tendency to respond in a socially desirable way may be a personality trait that covaries with locus of control. Even though Cone (1971) found a negative correlation between the I-E scale and the Edwards Social Desirability Scale, his interpretation of these results is that internalizers may feel that, having control over the reinforcements accruing to them, they may behave in socially desirable ways in order to influence the dispensers of these reinforcers.

It should be said at this point that researchers, using factor analyses of commonly used social desirability scales, have identified two major factors in social desirability, that of self-deception, or unconscious evaluative bias in self-reports (the alpha factor), and

that of impression management, or deliberate falsification (the gamma factor) (Paulhus, 1984). It is Paulhus' contention that only the gamma factor need be controlled in self-report research.

Because the Edwards scale measures the alpha factor, and has been found to have a correlation to Rotter's I-E scale, this is consistent with the research that points out that a typically internal response may be confounded with a tendency to respond in a socially desirable fashion.

Ashkanasy (1985) found a significant relationship between the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale and a likert scale format I-E scale. No significant correlation was found for the more commonly used forced-choice format. In an item by item correlation with social desirability scores, the correlations were found to be an almost perfect indicator of internality vs. externality. This appears to provide support for the notion that internality is positively valued, although the author's overall conclusion is that the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability scale may not be a useful instrument in this area of research, and that the Rotter scale is not a

"clean" measure of the locus of control construct. Even though Ashkanasy (1985) claims that the research bears out that internality is a socially valued characteristic, a study by Furnham and Henderson (1982) does not appear to be in agreement with this assumption. In a study designed to measure response bias in self-report measures, Furnham and Henderson administered Rotter's I-E scale to subjects who were told to respond in one of three ways; (1) to present self in the best possible light (fake good), (2) in the worst possible light (fake bad), and (3) as a mental patient might. A control group was asked to respond to the questionnaire honestly ("as you really are"). The results seemed to indicate that Rotter's scale is moderately insensitive to faking. Even though the fake good subjects had a higher internal score, it was not statistically significantly different than the fake bad group. The response bias on Rotter's scale in the internal direction, however, should be considered when interpreting results in correlational studies. Because the measures of marital satisfaction are also self-report in nature, the same kind of response bias may be a factor in the analysis of research that

attempts to correlate locus of control and marital satisfaction.

CHAPTER VI

THEORIES RELATED TO LOCUS OF CONTROL

Lefcourt (1981) agrees with Rotter's (1975) recommendation to use the locus of control variable within the theoretical framework from which it evolved. It is Lefcourt's opinion that compliance with Rotter's recommendations would reduce the errors created by the misconceptions of this theory, and that the variable might not continue to be regarded as a singular trait. It may be that Rotter's instrument is not a bad one, but that the researchers using this instrument have mis-conceptualized the concept of locus of control. This may be due in part to a lack of understanding of social learning theory, or an unintentional deviation from or re-wording of Rotter's definition of locus of control.

There has been research done on similar concepts, whose theoretical base is not grounded in social learning theory. These approaches provide an alternative framework in which to conceive of locus of control and may better explain the conceptualizations and conclusions drawn by researchers using Rotter's instrument.

Heider's Locus of Causality

A person and his behavior can be thought of as a causal unit of origin and effect (Heider, 1944). As described by DeCharms (1981), locus of causality has as its emphasis the ownership of action. Heider laid the cornerstone for attribution theory by emphasizing the perception aspect of the locus of causality for behavior.

Heider's work on locus of causality is based in part on cognitive theory and also on Gestalt Theory. It was also the basis for DeCharms Origin-Pawn theory.

DeCharm's Origin-Pawn Theory

DeCharms' (1968) concept of personal causation originally drew heavily on Heider's concept, but his more recent research focuses more on the experience of personal causation that with its perception. DeCharms coined the word origin for a person who experiences the locus of causality for his/her behavior as internal, or within himself/herself. Pawn is used for the person who experiences this locus of causality as external to

himself/ herself. According to DeCharms, man's motivational propensity is to effectively produce changes in his environment, to strive to be the causal agent of his own behavior. Personal causation itself is not the motive; the general orientation is toward being the "origin," but the specific manifestation is toward goals generally classified as affiliation, achievement, or power motives.

Both Heider and DeCharms drew on cognitive theory as the basis of these conceptualizations. DeCharms points out that, although words like external and internal are used in discussing his theory, that locus of causality and locus of control of reinforcement are quite different concepts, and that scores of the two measures are not correlated with one another. The measurement device used by DeCharms is of a projective nature. It uses the technique of thought-sampling and was designed to measure intentional, reasoned, and deliberate action. The resulting stories are scored for internally motivated decision, approach, and solution to a given problem, and for internal goal setting, instrumental activity, self-confidence, reality perception, and personal responsibility.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this theory is that it is possible to enhance originship (or personal responsibility), through training. The methodology employed is beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice it to say that this can be thought of as an important distinction when compared to locus of control.

McKinney - Agency and Patient

"Agency" and "patient" refer to an individual's engagement style, or the manner in which the individual experiences his/her interaction with the environment (McKinney, 1980; DeCharms, 1968). Agent implies "doing," while patience implies "being done to." Agency and patience are the extreme ends of a continuum that has as its center a composite of the two, represented by the term "interaction." An interactive person engages with his/her environment in a more flexible way; for example, talking and hearing, choosing and being chosen.

The concept of agency-patience can be thought of as similar in some ways to the active-reactive dimension of personality outlined in developmental theory, or its

active (self as subject) - reactive (self as object) corollary. The author relates that some aspects are also similar to the agency-communion distinction.

While locus of control is derived from social learning theory and locus of causality from cognitive theory, engagement style owes its origin to existential psychology. Individuals have their own beliefs about their own agency and patience, and are free to choose their own perception or belief.

On the surface, the concept of locus of control may appear to be similar, the agent having internal control and the patient having external control. The author contends that locus of control is more complicated in that agency is a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for an internal expectancy. McKinney predicts that the individual with an internal locus of control is both agent and patient, or said to be "interacting." He further states that engagement style is a more primitive idea, referring to the experience of acting or being acted upon, with no implication about expected results or outcomes of the behavior.

Engagement style is also tested with the use of a projective measure. It consists of drawings exhibiting ambiguity about whether the subject is acting or being acted upon. Reliability tests of the instrument have been consistently high.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Marital satisfaction has been found to be related to such things as sex-role flexibility, high exchange orientation, enhanced leisure time together, and egalitarianism in terms of power and control. Because marriage involves two individuals who possess complex and ever-changing beliefs and behaviors, it is important for each partner to recognize imperfections in these beliefs and behaviors and learn to interact with each other flexibly and functionally and without projecting blame onto the partner for the perceived imperfections in the other. On a cognitive level, individuals feel and act on what they think and believe. It would seem reasonable to assume that the assessment of those beliefs would be a beneficial aspect of therapeutic intervention that has increased marital satisfaction as its goal.

Researchers attempting to correlate locus of control with marital satisfaction have used, with a fair amount of consistency, Rotter's I-E scale to assess locus of

control (see table 1). The hypothesis statements and concluding remarks in these studies tend to use phrases that suggest that errors may have been made in the author's conceptualization of locus of control. For example, in Bugaighis' (1983) study the authors' were interested in assessing perceived personal control and used the construct of locus of control to define this. Their assessment of locus of control consisted of a single question, "How much control do you feel you have over your life?" (p. 277). Constantine & Bahr (1981) state that externality, or "the sense of not being in control of one's life" (p.20) arises from the dissolution process during divorce. Doherty (1980) describes the internal spouse as "the individual's sense of autonomous control over his or her life" (p. 399). It is typical of an author using Rotter's concept of locus of control, to paraphrase the definition that Rotter proposed for this construct. Even though the stated definition retains, more or less, the flavor of Rotter's original definition, some of the attempts appear to have lost (or added)

important elements in the translation. Clayson and Frost (1984), for example, state that "a person who assumes responsibility for what happens to him (her) is identified as having an internal locus of control, whereas an individual who feels little or no responsibility for what happens to him (her) is identified as having an external locus of control" (pp. 920-921). It appears as if the author took considerable liberty in paraphrasing Rotter's definition. However, because the hypothesis of their study was based on Rotter's construct, and the instrument used was Rotter's scale, it is possible that the conclusions drawn may be biased by the author's interpretation of the locus of control construct.

Genshaft (1980) used Rotter's I-E scale to assess "the participants' internal reference system of self to others" (p. 81), and found that dissatisfied wives tended to perceive greater external controls than satisfied wives. Is perception of external controls the same as expectancy of reinforcement?

Greene & Kelley (1985) state that "locus of control describes the perception persons have on the extent to which events in their lives are under their control" (p.

239). This feeling of having personal control can be thought of as a greater sense of competency. Even though Rotter (1966) discussed competency as a concept related to locus of control, there doesn't seem to be any evidence that "competency" is a component of his definition of locus of control.

Richards (1983) defines locus of control as "a generalized expectancy that obtaining reinforcement depends primarily on one's own efforts (internal control)" (p. 897), and assesses locus of control with the use of four author constructed questions. His substitution of the word effort for "behavior or attributes" (Rotter, 1966) changes the meaning somewhat.

Blau (1984) begins a discussion of locus of control by saying, "an internal scorer perceives that personal events are dependent on one's own behavior, while an external scorer perceives that such events are the result of fate, luck, or powers beyond one's control" (p. 173). At first reading, this appears to restate the essence of Rotter's theory without distortion, but examined closely, one see's crucial differences. Blau says "individual perceives that personal events are dependent on one's

behavior" (p. 171). and Rotter says, "the degree to which individual perceives that the reward follows from, or is contingent upon, his own behavior" (p. 1). This subtle, but meaningful distinction has as it's foundation, the loss of the word "reinforcement" from Rotter's original theory.

The inclusion of these inconsistencies is not made with the intent to criticize the research or the conclusions drawn. They are outlined as a preface to the following discussion on the concept of locus of control.

Perhaps there are as many conceptualizations of the concept of locus of control as there are researchers investigating it. Perhaps the different conceptualizations are valid in their own right, but they have been born of a different theoretical base than social learning theory. As previously discussed, locus of causality is a concept based on cognitive (and in part, Gestalt) theory (Heider, 1944). DeCharms (1968) origin-pawn concept also draws on cognitive theory and used the locus of causality conceptualization. McKinney's agency-patience theory owes its origin to existential psychology.

In his discussion of locus of control vs. locus of causality, DeCharms explains that the reason the literature is strewn with confusion between the two concepts is in the underlying confusion between the critical distinctive features of the two concepts, reinforcement and behavior. Rotter (1966) stated his concern that the concept of locus of control might be confused with other, apparently related concepts. He cites, as an example, the work of Reisman (1954) whose conception is based on the degree to which people are controlled by internal goals and desires versus the degree to which they are controlled by external forces, particularly that of conformity.

When given only superficial inspection, these concepts appear to be similar and easily confused, but important distinctions can be found if one examines them closely. The first distinction is in the theoretical base on which these constructs were founded. The basis of social-learning theory is on the nature and effects of reinforcement, and has as its core the reciprocal influences between the individual and his environment. Individuals feel, act, and think based on their prior

experience. It is in this context that one must discuss locus of control. In contrast, cognitive theories support the belief that individuals feel and act on the basis of what they think. In other words, behaviors and emotions are initiated cognitively. It is in this context that one can debate the concepts of locus of causality and/or the origin-pawn theory. In a cognitive framework, external events (such as a marital partner's behavior) can contribute to but not directly induce or cause emotional or behavioral reactions. Rather, internal perceptions and evaluations of these external conditions are more direct and powerful sources of the emotional or behavioral response. The difference between Rotter's conceptualization and the more cognitive theories seems to center around the concept of self-efficacy. One may well recognize that a given behavior leads to a particular outcome (outcome expectancy - locus of control), but may not believe he has the power to execute the behavior (locus of causality).

The second distinction, also related to theoretical base, is the attention given in the locus of control construct to "generalized expectancy." A generalized

expectancy is a reasonably stable characteristic, this expectancy having been established as a consequence of social learning, or previous interaction with one's environment. A concept based on a cognitive theory would assume more flexibility, or changeability of the thought patterns of an individual, changes that could change his behavior. The other conceptualizations more readily fit with the idea that some researchers propose, that locus of control can be changed or altered, or that it is desirable to change the locus of control orientation. Researchers who attempt to construct "situation-specific" locus of control scales also seem to be overlooking the definition of "generalized expectancy" (Fleming and Courtney, 1983).

Also, between the various conceptualizations of this construct lay crucial differences in the meaning of externality. Rotter (1966) defines it as the degree to which he/she feels that the reward is controlled by forces outside of himself and may occur independently of his own actions. In other words, a reinforcement is perceived by the subject as <u>following</u> his own action, but is not entirely <u>contingent</u> upon that action. In his

definition there is no implication of personal self-efficacy or its lack. Externality is not defined specifically by any of the alternate conceptualizations, but is akin to the pawn and the patient, concepts to which self-efficacy could be applied. Perhaps it could be said, then, that the research that attempts to correlate locus of control and marital satisfaction is hatched on sound theoretical assumptions and tested on an unsound theoretical base.

The research on locus of control and marital satisfaction generally demonstrates a positive relationship between internal locus of control and higher levels of marital satisfaction (Doherty, 1983). Doherty proposes a model for this relationship that suggests that the connection between locus of control and marital satisfaction is mediated by problem-solving efficacy. To the extent that partners view themselves as effective problem solvers, they will be more satisfied in the marital relationship. If it can be shown that locus of control influences problem-solving behavior, then a theoretical link between locus of control and marital satisfaction can be made. Even though Doherty found a

clear link between internality and assertive problem-solving behavior, Doherty sees problems with this kind of straight-forward reasoning. First, he says, there is nothing in the theory (social learning) underlying the construct that suggests a relationship between locus of control and satisfaction with any particular aspect of life. Secondly, it is difficult to interpret the results of these studies in terms of a causal direction. However, on the premise of social learning theory, the reciprocal interaction between persons and their environment precludes the necessity for determining causality.

Doherty (1983) concludes, on the basis of his study of the related research, that the link between locus of control and marital satisfaction is tenuous. It is his opinion that the inconsistent findings may be the result of the complexity of the marital relationship and its dependence on other factors, such as age, gender, and cultural context of the subjects. Doherty considers the lack of a strong empirical base one of the weaknesses, but considers a strength its grounding in social learning theory. This is an interesting observation, considering that Rotter's own criticism of the research that uses his

construct, is the failure of the researchers to consider the theoretical base on which it is constructed.

Marital relationships are multifaceted and complex. The relationship between marital satisfaction and locus of control may explain differences in satisfaction, but if one attempts to explain these differences on the basis of social learning theory, what can be said? Can one conclude that the perception of reinforcements as controlled by luck or chance promotes feelings of helplessness, or victimization?

Conclusions

It is difficult to draw any straight-forward conclusions about the research on locus of control and marital satisfaction. It is clear that the existing research is complicated by methodological problems, assessment difficulties, and interpretation biases, which appear to be further complicated by a lack of understanding, or a misunderstanding, of the locus of control construct and its theoretical base.

To what extent, then, can practitioners rely on the conclusions of this research when counseling married

couples. Is locus of control orientation important in understanding or evaluating marital satisfaction? It may be that its importance should be considered within it's theoretical context, but not to the exclusion of other factors associated with marital satisfaction. It might also be useful for the practitioner to fully understand and appreciate the theoretical base on which this construct was predicated in order to understand and appreciate the implications of the literature that draw the conclusion that "internality" is the preferred orientation with respect to marital satisfaction.

Recommendations

As Rotter cautions researchers about the problems and misconceptions related to the locus of control construct, so must the reader of related literature be advised to scrutinize the conclusions and recommendations based on this research.

It might also be useful to conceptualize the marital relationship in the context of one of the alternate theories. A marital relationship between two pawns could be hypothesized as fraught with blame and lack of

personal responsibility. Engagement style appears to be a particularly useful concept for use in describing marital behavior and resulting satisfaction levels. The flexibility of the "interacting" style certainly has implications for marital satisfaction in light of the research that demonstrates equilibrium states and egalitarian stances as most satisfying.

The research on locus of control and marital satisfaction is valuable if viewed in the context of social learning theory. Research on marital satisfaction may be enhanced, however, with its consideration in the context of the origin-pawn theory, the agent-patient theory, or the theory of locus of causality.

A counselor may have better ways of conceptualizing, or labeling the personal causation factor that the researchers seem to equate with locus of control. Perhaps locus of responsibility more accurately reflects what the researchers are seeking. That is, a cognitive explanation of an aspect of interpersonal relationships that can be changed through therapeutic intervention. Whatever name is applied however, the importance of the theory underlying the concept cannot be minimized. The

conclusions that are drawn must be analyzed carefully if good therapeutic decisions are to be made.

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